

The road streamed with little rivers the color of coffee and cream. Tiny toads hopped about and Garnet walked carefully so as not to step on them. Her slicker had a strong oily smell that was delicious, and she had found a forgotten piece of licorice in one of the pockets.

In the mailbox there was an important looking envelope for her father, two letters for her mother and an uninteresting postal card for Jay on which there was a picture of an office building and two parked cars. It was from Uncle Julius in Duluth. There weren't any Letters for Garnet, but then there never were except at Christmas time and on her birthday.

She put the mail in her sticky slicker pocket and turned back towards Citronella's house. She slopped and splashed across the lawn and up the porch steps and looked through the screen door at the dark hall with the hat rack and rubber plant.

"Citro-nella!" she called and pressed her face against the screen. The Hauser house had its own smell like all houses. It smelled of brown soap and ironing and linoleum; rather stuffy.

"Citronella!" called Garnet again and this time Citronella answered and came thumping down the stairs, with her bangs flopping on her forehead.

"I was up in great-grandma's, room," she explained. "Come on up, Garnet. She's telling me about when she was little."

Garnet stepped out of her muddy boots and went in. She hung her slicker up and barefooted climbed the stairs behind Citronella.

Citronella's great-grandmother was named Mrs. Eberhardt, and she was very, very old. She had a little room in the front of the house, full of photographs of her relatives. She had grown small with age and sat, light as a leaf, in a rocking chair with a red crocheted

blanket over her knees. She liked bright colors, and especially red.

"Yes," she told the two children, "I always liked red. When I was a little girl we used to make our own dye for clothes. In the fall we gathered the sumach berries and boiled them; then we'd dip in the cloth, but when it was finished it came out sort of a brownish color, not the red you'd expect. I was always disappointed."

"What was it like then, in this valley?" asked Garnet.

"Oh, it was wild country," replied Mrs. Eberhardt.

"There was only one other family living there.

Blaiseville was the nearest town, three miles away, and it was a little bit of a place then. We used to work very hard, we had to do everything for ourselves. There were eleven of us children; I was next to the youngest. The boys helped father plowing and tending the farm, and the girls helped mother with the churning, baking, spinning and soap-making. In summer, when we were tiny things, we used to lie in my father's wheat field, each with a pair of shingles to slap together when the crows came over. The deer sometimes came too, and we had to frighten them away. But often we used to go down to the river and hide in the bushes and watch them come to drink. Beautiful animals they were, but I haven't seen one in thirty years.

"Yes, it was wild country then, all woods and open fields and very few roads. My father used to ride into Blaiseville on a chestnut mare named Duchess. Sometimes when I was good he'd take me too, riding behind him and holding to his waist. My, my, he was a big man. It was like putting your arms around a big tree. Often we wouldn't start home till after dark, and it used to make me feel important and sort of adventurous to be riding through those thick, black woods

with my father.

"Them were Indians, too, in those days. I used to sleep in a little trundle bed with my sister Matty. In the daytime it was pushed under the big bed my father and mother slept in, but at night it was pulled out and set in its own corner. From where we lay we could see into the next room where the fire was burning. My, we had awful winters then. We used to be snowbound for weeks at a time. We kept the fires burning day and night and I remember wearing three pairs of woolen knit stockings and so many flannel petticoats I must have looked like a cabbage wrong-side up. Well, on those cold nights when Matty and I were supposed to be asleep we'd sometimes look into the other room where the shadows and firelight kept changing shape and nickered, and then suddenly we'd see the front door begin to open. 'Look Matty,' I'd whisper and pinch her. 'They're coming in again.' I felt sort of scared with goose flesh all over me, and Matty'd grab my hand. Sure enough, the door would open wide and in would come the Indians, quiet as cats, sometimes one or two, sometimes as many as ten. They wore fur hats and clothes made out of deerskin. We could hear them grunt and sigh as they lay down in front of the fire in our warm house. We never saw them leave, we were asleep, and they went out very early before it was light; but we'd always find a present left behind in exchange for our fireside. Sometimes it was a haunch of venison, or a couple of rabbits for stewing, or maybe a basket, or a sack of meal. Once I remember they left some moccasins and among them was a child's pair just my size. My, they were comfortable, and real pretty too, with bead work on the toes. I felt like crying when they wore out."

"I wish I had some," said Garnet, wriggling her bare

toes. "They're the only kind of shoes I'd like to wear."

Citronella was lying on the floor tickling the Maltese cat who sat smiling with his paws folded under him and purring roughly.

"Tell me about the time you were bad, great-grandma," said Citronella. "You know, on your tenth birthday."

Mrs. Eberhardt laughed. "Again?" she asked. "Well, Garnet hasn't heard it, has she? You know, Garnet, I was a very headstrong child, always wanting my own way and dying into tantrums when I was crossed. Well, in Blaiseville at that time there was only one store; a general store it was -- "

"It was called Elly Gensler's Emporium," interrupted Citronella, who knew the story by heart.

"Yes," said Mrs. Eberhardt, "so it was. Elly Gensler was a tall, thin man without a chin, but we all liked him because he was good to us, and used to give us candy whenever we came in. He had everything in his store that you could think of: harness, groceries, calico by the yard, candy, shoes, books, tools, hats, grain and feed, and jewelry and toys. It was a wonderful place. My father used to joke about it. 'Elly,' he'd say, 'when you going to start selling livestock and locomotives?'

"Well, in Elly's showcase there was a coral bracelet, imitation I suppose it was, but my, I thought it was the prettiest thing I'd ever seen. It was made of coral beads with a coral heart dangling from it. I wanted it more than anything in the world; the only jewelry I'd ever had was strings of mountain ash berries, and rosehips. I thought about that bracelet and I thought about it; every time I went to Blaiseville I was half scared to go in Elly's store for fear it had been sold. Finally Elly said to me, 'Well, that bracelet's worth a dollar; but since you want it so bad and it's been in stock so long I'll knock it down to you for fifty cents.'

" 'Oh, thank you, Elly,' said I. 'When I have fifty cents I'll come and get it.'

"That was early in May, and it wasn't till the end of August that I had enough money, I'd had about fifteen cents already in a china savings bank (it was blue and white I remember, and shaped like a wooden shoe), and I worked hard and did extra chores to earn more. I used to weed and tend the whole watermelon patch myself and my father would give me a penny on every melon he sold. My birthday nab on the twenty-seventh of August and my father promised me that when it came he would take me to Blaiseville on Duchess and I could get the bracelet.

"Well, the birthday came at last, one of those clear, hot days that come towards the end of summer. I can remember it as if it was last week. I was ten years old. After breakfast I did my chores around the home and then I went out of doors. My father was saddling Duchess in front of the barn. My, I felt happy. I had the fifty cents tied up in a handkerchief that clinked when I shook it.

" 'Shall I change my dress, father?' I called.

"My Esther looked at me. 'Not today, Fanny,' he said. 'I can't take you today after ah. I have to go to Hedgeville on business.'

"Well, I didn't say anything. I turned around and went into the house. I helped my mother and sisters with the washing, got vegetables from the garden for dinner, helped prepare and cook them. But I couldn't eat. Ah the time my sneer was growing inside of me till I felt as if I'd burst. After dinner my brother Thomas and I went up to the woods with a couple of pails to get blackberries. I was getting madder and madder; tears kept coming into my eyes and I didn't see what I was doing and tore my dress on the brambles. Finally I

couldn't stand it any longer. I gave Thomas my pail.

" 'You fill it,' I said. ' I'm going to Blaiseville to get my bracelet.'

"Thomas looked at me with his eyes popping. 'How you going to get there?' he asked.

" 'Walk,' said I, 'and if you tell anybody where I've gone I'll whip you good!'

"Poor Thomas, his mouth hung open; he was only six years old. I should have known better than to leave him there alone! But I was a naughty, heedless girl.

"Well, so I walked and walked. It was hot and the road was dusty and I got a blister on my heel. But with every step the money in my pocket thumped against my leg and I thought about the bracelet. Finally I got to Blaiseville and walked straight into Elly Gensler's store.

"I've come for the bracelet, Elly,' said I. 'I've got fifty cents to buy it with.' "

"Elly looked at me kind of queer. 'Why, Fanny, said he, I thought you wasn't never coming. I sold that bracelet to Minetta Harvey more'n a week ago.'

"Well, that was just too much. I put my head down on the counter and cried fit to break my heart. Elly felt real bad about it.

" 'Non, Fanny,' he said, 'don't cry. I'll sell you the little agate locket for the same price and it's a better buy. Or maybe you'd like to have the blue bead necklace?'

"But, no, nothing would do for me except that coral bracelet.

"At last I stopped crying and dried my eyes and told Elly I had to go as it was getting late. I don't suppose he had any idea I was going home alone at that hour, or he wouldn't have let me leave. He gave me an all-day sucker and patted my shoulder.

" 'Never mind about that little bracelet,' he said. 'Next time I go to Hodgeville maybe I can find you another one just like it.'

"Well, the sun was setting and I commenced to hurry. The woods were dark and thick on either side of the road and they got darker by the minute. There wasn't any sound except the crickets. I sniffled some, and felt sorry for myself. My, but I was disappointed and tired too.

"I'd gone about three quarters of the way, I guess, when I noted that someone was walking towards me on the road. It was real dark by this time, the stars were out but it was hard to see. For a minute I thought of hiding by the roadside, but then I decided that since I knew every single person for miles around, there was nothing to be scared of. It wasn't till I got close to him that I saw this man was a stranger. He had a bundle under one arm and he was wearing a deerskin jacket like the Indians wore.

" 'Good evening,' said I politely as I came near to him. I kept right on going.

" 'Hello, little girl,' said the man and reached out and grabbed me by the arm. 'Where are you going in such a hurry?'

" 'Home,' I answered, trying not to sound scared. 'Please Let me go, I'm late for supper.' Oh dear, oh dear, I thought, why didn't I stay with Thomas?

" 'Supper,' said the man. 'How would you like it if you didn't have any supper to go to? How would you like it if you didn't know where your next meal was coming from?' He held my arm tighter. 'Or have you perhaps got a few pennies in your pocket that will buy some food for a hungry man?'

" 'Oh, yes, yes!' I cried and I took the knotted handkerchief out of my pocket and gave it to him. 'There's

fifty cents there,' I said, 'and you can keep it all.' Then I pulled my arm free and ran like the wind. I didn't dare look back, but it seemed to me as if I could hear that man laughing at me all the way home.

"I stumbled up the path to our door and burst into the house gasping for breath and red in the face.

" 'Fanny!' cried my mother, 'where is Thomas?'

" 'Thomas!' I said. 'Isn't he home?'

" 'Indeed he's not.' answered my mother. 'I've been sick with worry about you both; the boys were just going out to search for you. Where is Thomas? Where did you lose him?'

" 'Oh, mother,' I said, 'I left him getting blackberries all by himself.' Then I broke down and told her the whole story.

"My big brothers, Jonathan and Charles, went hunting for Thomas with a couple of lanterns. Charles took his shot-gun too.

"I went outside and sat on the gatepost looking out over the valley. By and by the moon came up. It was full, I remember, a real harvest moon; and the mists began to rise from the river and all the little ponds like smoke. An owl called and called somewhere in the woods and I heard a fox bark. I don't suppose there was a more miserable child in all the world than I was at that minute. Oh, Thomas, I thought, why did I leave you alone in the woods? And all for a silly bracelet that I never got.

"It seemed to me as if I sat there for hours. By the time I saw my brothers' Lanterns glittering among the trees my clothes were drenched with dew and my teeth were chattering.

"My mother came out of the house and called to them: 'Is Thomas with you?'

"And he was, thank goodness! They'd found him wandering around and crying in that boggy place over

near where Craddock's farm is now. All the time that he was lost and frightened he had been careful not to spill the blackberries out of the buckets!

"Well, I crept indoors and got undressed and into the trundle bed beside Matty who was fast asleep. A long while later I heard Duchess's hoofs on the wooden bridge over the slough and knew that my father was coming home from Hodgeville. That bridge always made a noise like thunder.

"When he came in I listened to my mother telling him about how I had behaved.

" 'Well, poor Fanny,' he said. 'I won't say anything further to her. She seems to have been punishing herself all day long.'

"And it was true. I felt just as if I'd had a whipping.

"So that's the story of what happened to me on my tenth birthday."

Garnet stood up and hopped on one foot. It was all pins and needles and she hadn't even noticed.

"Oh, I wish you'd gotten the bracelet," she said.

"It's the worst birthday I ever heard of; I think your father was mean not to keep his promise."

"No, he was never mean," said Mrs. Eberhardt.

"On the Christmas after that he gave me a little box, and what do you suppose was in it?"

"I know," gloated Citronella. "A coral bracelet was in it!" said her great-grandmother triumphantly. "The very twin of the one Elly had sold to Minetta Harvey. I could hardly believe my eyes. 'Father,' I shouted. 'where did you ever get it?' And, do you know, my father had bought that bracelet in Hodgeville on my birthday so many weeks before. It had caught his eye in a shop window, and he'd thought to himself 'There's a bracelet just like the one that Fanny wants so much. I'll get her this and she can keep her fifty cents for

something else.' But of course when he got home and heard about all the trouble I'd caused he decided he'd better wait until Christmas."

"Have you got the bracelet still?" asked Garnet.

"No, not now," replied Mrs. Eberhardt. "I wore it till I was quite a big girl and then one day when I was drawing water from the well I reached out to take the bucket from the windlass and my bracelet broke apart. All the beads and the little red heart went tumbling into the water far below. I could hear them splash as they went in."

She gave a long sigh that ended in a yawn.

"Run along, children," she said, "I think I need a little nap now. It makes me sleepy to think so far back; more than seventy years ago, think of that. Was I the same person? Sometimes it seems as if it had all happened to somebody else."

Garnet and Citronella tiptoed down the stairs.

"I wish I had a great-grandmother," said Garnet enviously. "I've only got a grandmother, and she lives way off in Duluth so I never see her."

"Grant-grandma's nice," said Citronella complacently. "She tells me lots of stories. Only she sleeps all the time. Old people always do, I wonder why. When I grow up I'm going to stay up all night long every night until I die."

The two girls went into the kitchen for something to eat. They found a chocolate cake in the cake box and some hermits in a crockery jar. That was the wonderful thing about Citronella's house; there was always a cake in the kitchen at the right time. Often there was a dish of vinegar candy, too; and the cookie jar was never quite empty. Probably that was why most of the Hausers were so fat.

When Garnet said good-bye and went outdoors again

she found that the rain had stopped and the afternoon sun was shining through a yellow mist. Clear drops of water hung from every leaf and petal, and mourning doves cried softly from all the woods in the valley. Garnet saw a snake move like a drawn ribbon through wet ferns; she saw a caterpillar with dewy fur climbing a mullein stalk, and a snail with his hems out enjoying the damp.

Once on days like this, thought Garnet, only the Indians had been here to see the snake, the caterpillar and the snail. On moccasined feet they had moved softly among the grasses and jostled down the rain drops from the elder flowers.

It would have been fun to be an Indian girl wearing a fringed deerskin dress. Garnet saw a long, rather bedraggled crow's feather in the grass and picked it up and stuck it in her hair. Then she crouched down and walked tiptoe in the way she imagined an Indian would walk.

A loud laugh startled her, and she looked up to see Jay leaning over the pasture fence.

"What are you walking all bent over like that for? And why have you got that old feather in your hair?" he asked. "You look like a hen with a stomach ache."

Garnet felt silly. She took the feather out of her hair and decided not to give day the postal card till later.

Then she went on to the barn where her father was and gave him the important looking letter. She wanted to know what was in it and leaned against a convenient cow while he opened it. He tore off the end of the envelope in a hurry, and she watched his eyes move swiftly back and forth over the printed lines of the letter. He smiled.

"Garnet," he said. "We won't have to worry any longer about having this old barn collapse over our

heads. We're going to build a new one. The government's going to loan us some money!"

IV. The Lime Kiln

GARNET yawned and slapped the lid on the last ham sandwich and put it with the others in a damp towel. She closed her mouth abruptly, remembering that this was no time to be yawning if she was going to stay up all night. She looked out of the window; already the swallows were high in the sky, always a sign of late afternoon; and she saw Jay in the pasture, carrying milk buckets.

Garnet stretched her arms above her head; up and up till all her muscles felt like pulled elastic. Then she took down the coffeepot; the big agate one with the chipped lid. It took plenty of coffee to keep her father awake on kiln nights.

At last the lime kiln was being fired; for three days and three nights it had burned steadily to make the lime needed in building a fine new barn -- lime for cement, for plaster and for whitewash. The kiln was two miles away in a thick wood; it was a big cone-shaped oven, backed against a hill. Two of the Hausers' oldest boys stayed there all day pushing logs into the blazing fire, and in the evening -- Garnet's father and Mr. Freebody relieved them. The fire had to be fed every ten or fifteen minutes, without fail, and the huge logs must be pushed in gently, so as not to jar the piled Limestone structure within. Each night Garnet had begged to be taken along, and now at last her father had consented.

She put the big coffeepot on the table beside the other things, where it dominated the group like a brigadier general. Most kitchen articles had characters for Garnet. The teapot smiled all around its lid and purred